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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a model and some empirical research on the process of ethnic identity development beyond childhood. Several models of ethnic identity development among minorities share with Erikson the idea that an achieved identity is the result of an identity crisis, which involves a period of searching that leads to a commitment. In order to achieve a secure ethnic identity, minority adolescents must explore the meaning of being a minority in a predominantly white society. The paper developed a measure for assessing ethnic identity development based on the two components of the identity process, search and commitment, that could be used across ethnic groups. A questionnaire was administered to 300 undergraduates at an ethnically diverse urban college campus. Responses were analyzed from the following: (1) American-born Mexican Americans; (2) American-born Asian Americans; (3) American-born Blacks; (4) American-born Whites; and (5) foreign-born Asian students. Results include the following: (1) ethnic identity is an important issue with all groups; (2) mixed race subjects may experience higher levels of identity conflict; (3) most minority students seem to have achieved or be in moratorium in the area of ethnic identity; (4) minority students appear to have begun the identification process at an earlier age; (5) a strong relationship exists for minorities between ethnic identity and self-esteem; and (6) whites experience lower levels of search than minorities, but similar levels of commitment. A list of 44 references is included. (FMW)

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNIC IDENTITY IN ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to present a model and some empirical research on the process of ethnic identity development beyond childhood, a topic that has been little studied. Several models of ethnic identity development among minorities of color share with Erikson (1968) the idea that an achieved identity is the result of an identity crisis, which involves a period of exploration and experimentation, leading to a decision or commitment. In order to achieve a secure ethnic identity, minority adolescents must explore the meaning of being a minority in a predominantly White society. Evidence is presented in how this is accomplished, leading to acceptance of both one's own and other ethnic groups.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNIC IDENTITY IN ADOLESCENTS[1]

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The focus of identity research derived from the theoretical statements of Erikson (1968) and the empirical work of Marcia (1966) has been on the areas of occupation, ideology, sex roles, and, more recently, interpersonal domains (Waterman, 1985; Bennion & Adams, 1986). However, identity development is not entirely an individual process; the culture into which a person is born plays an important role in the the development of one's identity. The process of identity development is located "in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture" (Erikson, 1968, p.22; italics in the original). Furthermore, "true identity depends on the support which the young receive from the collective sense of identity which social groups assign to [them]: [their] class, [their] nationality, [their] culture" (Erikson, 1964, p. 93). There is evidence that Erikson himself struggled with his own cultural identity, as a Dane growing up in Germany with a Jewish step-father and later emigrating to the United States (1970). But he did not develop in any detail the process by which one's culture or ethnicity is incorporated into one's personal identity, and there has been

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relatively little research on the development of ethnic identity in adolescence or adulthood.

The role of group identity, particularly for minority group members, has been studied primarily by sociologists and social psychologists. Kurt Lewin (1948) stated that minority individuals need to feel an affinity with their group in order to develop a sense of well-being and to reduce self-hatred. Numerous writings by representatives of minority groups reiterate this point (e.g., Arce, 1981; Green, 1981; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Jarvenpa, 1985). "Ethnic self-identity is...central to the development of the personal identity of minority group members" (Maldonado, 1975; p. 621).

This acknowledged concern has resulted in a number of studies of ethnic identity. Four research traditions can be distinguished. Three areas of research are presented briefly below to clarify the issues involved, but will not be addressed in depth in this paper. The fourth, dealing with development of ethnic identity beyond childhood, is the focus of this paper.

1. A large number of studies involve attempts to define and measure ethnic identity for a particular group and examine its antecedents and correlates. Typically, researchers have developed a list of items tapping attitudes, behaviors, and cognitions relevant to a particular ethnic group and then used the measure to study ethnic identity in individuals from that group. These studies have focussed almost exclusively on one group, using measures developed for that group alone, thus permitting no generalization about ethnic identity across different populations. (Phinney, 1988).

2. A second group of studies of ethnic identity have examined the ways in which ethnic minority groups adapt to a dominant culture. In much of this research, ethnic identity is conceptualized as an aspect of acculturation (Berry, 1980). In this research, an individual's attitudes and behaviors are assessed with reference to both a minority ethnic group and a mainstream culture (e.g., Hutnik, 1986). Using an orthogonal model, in which individuals can be high or low on measures of identification with their ethnic culture and with the mainstream culture, at least four possible outcomes can be identified (Berry, 1980). Individuals may become assimilated, losing their own ethnic culture and adapting completely to the mainstream; they may become integrated, maintaining their own culture but adapting equally to the mainstream ("pluralism"); they may remain embedded in their own culture, in barrios or ghettos, without adapting to the mainstream; or they may lose their own culture, without becoming part of the mainstream ("marginal man"; Stonequist, 1935).

In the two types of research discussed above, ethnic identity is studied as it exists at a particular moment in time, with little recognition of developmental or historical change. That is, the focus has been on the content of ethnic identity (attitudes and behaviors specific to a particular group), with little consideration of the process of ethnic identity formation (the way in which the individuals develop an understanding of, and attitudes about, their ethnicity).

3. A group of studies has been concerned with young children's learning of their own ethnic label, particularly with the phenomenon of incorrect self-labeling by Black and other minority children. This aspect of ethnic identity is more properly called ethnic self-identification.

The research in this area has recently been reviewed in detail by Aboud (1987), and will not be discussed here.

The focus of this paper is on the process of ethnic identity development beyond childhood, a topic that has been little studied. By age of 7 or 8, most children know their ethnic label (Aboud, 1987). However, with the onset of adolescence, they are faced with a number of changes that force them to reexamine the meaning of their ethnic group membership. Increased cognitive abilities, increased interactions outside their own community, greater concern with appearance and dating, and thoughts about their future in terms of job prospects and marriage are all likely to make ethnicity more salient. The ethnic identity issue for adolescents becomes one of integrating their group membership as part of their identity, and thus achieving the sense of wholeness that Erikson (1968) describes.

MODELS OF ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Several empirical studies or conceptual models have attempted to describe ethnic identity development in adolescents or adults. Cross (1978) developed a model of the development of Black consciousness in college students during the Civil Rights era, and Parham and Helms (1981, 1985a, 1985b) have conducted a series of studies using Cross' model. Kim (1981) developed a model of Asian-American identity development based on interviews with Asian-American young adult females. A model based on clinical experience has been proposed by Atkinson, Morton & Sue (1983), and Arce (1981) has conceptualized the issues with regard to Chicanos.

These writings all deal only with minorities of color. Although there have been some studies of the content of ethnic identity in White ethnic groups, such research has not addressed identity development in these groups.

These conceptualizations of ethnic identity development among minorities of color share with Erikson (1968) the idea that an achieved identity is the result of an identity crisis, which involves a period of exploration and experimentation, leading to a decision or commitment. Marcia's (1966) empirical work based on Erikson's theory suggests four identity statuses related to the extent of exploration and commitment. An individual who has neither engaged in exploration nor made a commitment is said to be diffuse; a commitment made without exploration, usually on the basis of parental values, represents a foreclosed status. An individual in the process of exploration without having made a commitment is in moratorium; a firm commitment following a period of exploration is indicative of an achieved identity. Waterman (1982) has presented possible developmental pathways by which individuals may progress from a diffuse or foreclosed status through a moratorium to an achieved identity. A comparison of these statuses and pathways to the stages of ethnic identity development as described by minority writers suggests many parallels, along with some important differences. A description of ethnic identity development is presented below, with substantial quotation from minority writers, to convey the flavor of their writings.

Preencounter/Conformity

Existing models of ethnic identity development suggest that minority

subjects begin with an acceptance of the values and attitudes of the majority culture, including, often, internalized negative views of their own group that are held by the majority. In this first stage, "the person's world view is dominated by Euro-American determinants" (Cross, 1978; p. 17). Parham and Helms's (1985) measure of Black identity development, which builds on Cross' work, includes items for this stage such as "I believe that the white man is superior intellectually," and "Sometimes I wish I belonged to the White race." Similarly, the model suggested by Atkinson, Morton, & Sue (1979) describes a Conformity Stage, in which individuals show an "unequivocal preference for dominant cultural values over those of their own culture...Individuals who acknowledge their distinguishing physical and/or cultural characteristics consciously view them as a source of shame" (pp. 35-36).

Kim's (1981) data, based on in-depth interviews with adult Asian-American women, gives ample support to this view. She identifies an initial stage in which "subjects ... internalized the White societal values and standards and saw themselves through the eyes of the White society" (p. 129). She notes two types of what she calls White identification, active and passive. "In active identification, subjects considered themselves as being very similar to their White peers. Apparent differences between themselves and Whites were not acknowledged, at least not on the conscious level. They saw themselves as White and acted as if they were. They also did not want to be seen as Asian in any way" (p. 133). "In passive White identification, subjects did not consider themselves to be White. They may have experienced periods of wishful thinking and fantasizing about looking like White people. They

did, however, share in common with the actively identifying group, the acceptance of White values, beliefs, standards, and Whites as a reference group" (p. 136).

This first stage of minority identity development might be compared to foreclosure, as described by Marcia (1980), in that individuals have taken on without question the values and attitudes to which they have been exposed. However, in this case, it is society's values, not necessarily those of their parents, that have been absorbed. It is not clear what role parents play in the process, as there is no relevant research. An important question for future research is the extent to which parents influence this first stage; that is, whether parents who themselves have an achieved ethnic identity can convey to their children a positive view of their own group and thus eliminate this stage. However, Erikson's (1968) model suggests that all individuals must examine the issues for themselves, regardless of their starting point.

Encounter/crisis

This initial stage of ethnic identity is conceptualized as continuing until the individuals encounter a situation that forces awareness of racism and the lower status of their ethnic group in society. Typically, this precipitates an identity crisis. According to Erikson (1968), the identity crisis is "a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshaling resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation" (p.16). Many of Kim's subjects experienced "identity conflict...as a situation where an individual perceives certain aspects of him/herself which s/he rejects

simultaneously" (p. 153). For the Asian-American women whom she interviewed, this occurred in junior high school or even in elementary school. A common experience was that of recognizing that White standards of attractiveness are more valued by society but that one's skin, hair, or features differ from these standards. Mexican-American adolescents are faced with a similar conflict, as they become aware of the negative images of their group that are presented to them by society (Mendelberg, 1986).

Cross' model was developed originally to describe changes in Black consciousness during a period of social change; it is not clear to what extent it applies developmentally. In his view, the crisis can be precipitated by "a shocking personal or social event that temporarily dislodges the person from his old worldview, making the person receptive to a new interpretation of his identity" (Cross, 1978; p. 17). At this point, according to Atkinson et al. (1983), "the individual experiences a growing awareness that not all cultural values of the dominant group are beneficial to him/her" (p. 37).

In contemporary society, the crisis may result from an initial encounter with prejudice or discrimination. According to Arce (1981), the process of identity search "begins by forcing of identification--that is, being labeled in ethnic terms either by others of one's group or by the out-group" (p.185). Such enforced identification may "generate an internal quest for one's cultural roots [that] can lead to the development of group loyalty and pride..." (p. 186).

Immersion/moratorium

Before resolving the identity crisis, minority adolescents engage in a period of exploration, that is, a moratorium. This period has been described by writers on ego identity as a time of experimentation and inquiry, which may include activities such as "reading about the various possibilities, taking relevant coursework; talking with friends, parents or others knowledgable about the material of interest; and actual experimentation with different life goals or life styles" (Waterman, 1985; p. 11-12). For minority youth, the ethnic identity search is similar. According to Cross (1978), the search or "immersion" stage is characterized by an "intense concern to clarify the personal implications" of their ethnicity. For Kim's subjects, it involves "an effort to better understand themselves and their people," (p. 147); it may include heightened political consciousness, with involvement in social-political movements.

In interviews with middle class Black and White eighth graders in an integrated school, Tarver & Phinney (1988) found that about a third of the Black subjects were engaged in some form of exploration regarding their ethnicity. These subjects expressed interest in learning more about their culture and were actively involved in doing so; they talked with family or friends about ethnic issues, read books (beyond thoese required for school courses) and went to ethnic museums. In addition, they had thought about the effects of their ethnicity on their life, in the present and future. They often expressed awareness of prejudice and possible difficulties in attaining their educational or career objectives. In contrast, about two-thirds of the subjects had not given much thought to the issues and seemed generally unconcerned. We surmise

that they had not yet experienced a crisis.

However, in addition to involving a search for understanding about their culture, the ethnic identity search is likely to be highly emotional. "Included in this phase is anger and outrage directed toward White society. This occurs when [subjects] discover and allow themselves to feel some of the historical incidences of racism directed against Asian Americans " (Kim, 1981; p. 149). For Cross (1978), the process includes "the tendency to denigrate White people and White culture while simultaneously deifying Black people and Black culture" and can be accompanied by "euphoria, rage, ... perturbation, effrontery, high risk taking, a destructive mood in constant tension with dreams of revitalization, and an intense sense of intimacy toward Black life" (p. 17). In writing about Black youth, Erikson (1964) acknowledges the intensity of this period and recognizes the role of their anger and destructiveness: "A <u>transitory</u> 'negative identity' is often the necessary pre-condition for a truly positive and truly new one" (p. 37; italics in original).

The dilemma for minority students at this stage is presented in detail in Ogbu's (1987; Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986) discussion of "oppositional identity." Because of the way in which minorities have been treated historically, Black youth come to believe that they can never be treated like White Americans; thus, they seek to define themselves in contrast to White culture. "What Blacks consider appropriate or even legitimate for themselves in terms of attitudes, beliefs, preferences, behaviors, or practices are sometimes defined in opposition to the attitudes, beliefs, preferences, behaviors or practices of White

Americans" (p. 166). "The dilemma for a Black student, then, is that he or she has to choose between 'acting Black' or 'acting White'" (p. 168). In our interviews with middle class Black teen-agers, Tarver & Phinney (1988) found them distancing themselves from segments of the Black population, making clear that they are different from "the kids who are into gangs and violence."

Matute-Bianchi (1986) notes a similar distinction among adolescents of Mexican descent. Some students choose mainstream goals, embracing academic success as a goal and becoming involved in school activities. Others opt for stronger ties to their peers and community, for example showing greater Spanish language maintenance; they are often alienated from school.

But the choice to "act White" or embrace academic values may bring a heavy psychic cost if it means rejecting one's own group because of its perceived negative aspects (Arce, 1981). A healthy resolution of the difficulty can be achieved only if minority youth reject the way in which the dominant culture defines their group. As Arce (1981) describes the process: "Members of the group reinterpret the group's status, [including] questioning the legitimacy of the superordinate group to define the status of one's subordinated group;...and changing the meaning of the stereotypes attributed to one's group from negative to positive" (p. 184).

Internalization/identity achievement

The ideal outcome of the identity process is an achieved identity. Identity achievers have resolved uncertainties about their future

direction and have made commitments that will guide future action (Marcia, 1980). In the area of ethnicity, identity achievement corresponds to acceptance and internalization of one's ethnicity. "Following this period of cultural and political consciousness,... individuals develop a deeper sense of belonging to the group... When the person finally comes to feel at one with the group, the internalization process has been completed, and ethnic identity established" (Arce, 1981; p. 186). "Tension, emotionality, and defensiveness are replaced by a calm, secure demeanor. Ideological flexibility, psychological openness, and self-confidence about ones' Blackness are evident" (Cross, 1978; p. 18). A Black female adolescent stated, "My feelings about being Black have gotten stronger in the last year. When I was younger [it wasn't clear]...Now I know and I understand [what being Black means]." (Taver & Phinney, 1988).

According to Kim (1981), "self-concept during this stage is positive. Subjects feel good about who they are and feel proud to be Asian American. They also feel comfortable with both parts of themselves (Asian and American). At last, they feel at home with themselves" (p. 150). Most of Kim's subject reached this point in their early 20s; the lastest age was 31.

Generativity

The minority writers cited generally do not see internalization as the final stage of ethnic identity development. A secure ethnic identity leads to concern with other people, both from one's own and other minority or oppressed groups, and ultimately with all people regardless

of color. Kim's subjects "realize that being an Asian American is an important, but not their only, identity" (p. 152). At this point, according to Arce (1981), individuals may "develop a sense of responsibilitiy and personal commitment to the Chicano community as a whole.... [This stage] can give way eventually to a Third World mentality, in which one embraces, and aligns with, all other oppressed ethnic minorities" (p. 185). Items for Cross's final stage include items such as: "This person...feels a great love and compassion for all oppressed people" (Hall, Cross, & Freedle, 1972). Finally, the individual "discovers unity with mankind, transcending barriers of race, religion, age, or sex" (Hall, et al., 1972, p. 16). This stage beyond identity achievement might be compared to Erikson's (1968) stage of generativity, "the concern for establishing and guiding the next generation" (p. 138).

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

These descriptions of ethnic identity development in minorities are intriguing, but there has been little empirical research to support the model. There have been no cross-sectional or longitudinal studies examining changes across age groups, and most research has involved a single group, thus limiting generality. Reliability data on measures used has not been consistently presented. However, several studies can be mentioned.

Three studies of racial identity development in Black college students have been carried out by Parham and Helms (1981; 1985a; 1985b). Using the items based on Cross's model (Hall et al., 1972), they have

examined correlates of ethnic identity stages. They have found that the lower stages of identity development are related to lower self-esteem, anxiety, and a preference of White counselors, while the higher stages show either the opposite or no relationship to these variables. Similar findigs regarding preference for counselors are reported by Morton & Atkinson (1983).

Building on previous conceptual and empirical work, my research is aimed at a better understanding of the process of ethnic identity development as it applies across groups, including White adolescents. Because of the complexities of the issues and the current lack of empirical evidence for the stages of ethnic identity development, my colleagues and I have proceeded by investigating the two components of the identity process suggested by Marcia, namely, search and commitment. Since search and commitment together suggest identity achievement, we can derive from these two components an index of ethnic identity achievement. Our goals have been to develop methods of assessing ethnic identity development that could be used across ethnic groups, so as to allow for comparisons among adolescents from diverse minority groups and between them and White adolescents.

We began by developing a questionnaire measure of ethnic search and commitment in college students. Subjects were asked to rate their similarity on a 4-point scale to people with experiences or characteristics suggestive of search or commitment in the area of ethnicity. For example, one search item is: "People who have gone through a period of serious questioning about ethnicity"; a commitment items is: "People who are very clear about their own ethnicity and what it means to

them." Subjects received scores between 1 and 4 each, for ethnic search and for ethnic commitment, calculated as the mean of all the items for that scale. Also included in the questionnaire were measures of self-esteem, the rated importance of ethnic identity relative to other identity domains, and demographic variables, including own and parents ethnic group membership.

With this instrument we surveyed over 300 undergraduates in general education classes on an ethnically diverse urban campus. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess reliability of ethnic search and commitment items. For the ethnic identity search items, alpha was .69, indicating reasonably good reliability; for ethnic identity commitment, alpha was lower, .59. On the basis of item analysis, we revised the scale and administered it to undergraduates at a second campus; reliability was improved for both scales, to .80 for search and .66 for commitment. Although there needs to be additional work on the scales, these figures suggest that these components of ethnic identity can be measured by means of questionnaires.

We have examined the questionnaire responses for several different groups of students: American-born students from four ethnic groups, Asian-American, Mexican-American, Black, and White on two campuses (Phinney & Alipuria, 1987; Lochner & Phinney, 1988); a group of foreign-born (immigrant) Asian students (Phinney and Nguyen, 1988); and a group of ethnically mixed students, that is, with parents from two different groups (Alipuria & Phinney, 1988). The results discussed below draw on the body of research.

A first question to be asked is whether in fact ethnic identity is

an important issue in the development of an achieved identity. We found ethnic identity to be rated by the minority group subjects as a more important component of identity than the political domain, and at least equal in importance to religious identity. Ethnic identity was rated as quite or very important by over two-thirds of both the American-born and foreign born minority subjects, and by nearly three-fifths of the mixed subjects, compared to about one fourth of the White subjects. Clearly, this is a salient issue among the minority college students.

What do the results show regarding ethnic identity development? Because the categories of ethnic identity development have not been validated, we have not tried assigning individual subject to categories, but used rather the scores on each scale. The group scores show a number of interesting differences among the groups tested. The Black and Mexican-American students, and to a lesser degree the Asian-Americans, have high scores for both search and commitment, suggesting an achieved ethnic identity. Foreign-born Asians have significantly higher search scores than the American-born Asians; clearly the experience of immigration intensifies awareness of one's ethnicity and is likely to elicit activities typical of the moratorium period. The mixed race subjects show the highest levels of search and the lowest levels of commitment across two settings, giving strong indication of the identity conflict that has been reported by mixed-race subjects (Gibbs, 1987).

These high levels of exploration of ethnicity by minority subjects, together with generally high commitment scores, show most minority subjects to be achieved or in moratorium in the area of ethnic identity, when compared to White students. It seems likely that minority students

are forced to deal with the salient issue of ethnicity: foreclosure in the area of ethnicity may not be possible, at least for college students in culturally diverse settings. These results present an interesting contrast to ego identity research based on the widely used domains of occupation, ideology and sex roles. A number of studies with high school students (Abraham, 1986; Hauser, 1983; Markstrom, 1987) have found a tendency for minorities to be foreclosed in these areas. For these adolescents, the traditional values of their group, together with limited occupational opportunities and lack of role models, may inhibit their exploration in the domains of occupation, ideology, and sex roles.

The high degree of ethnic identity achievement evident among minority college students indicates that the beginnings of the process occur earlier. Much of the current ego identity research suggests that exploration in the areas of occupation, ideology, and sex roles takes place during the college years, although Archer (1982) has shown evidence of for it beginning earlier. We are finding strong evidence that ethnic identity search occurs in junior and senior high school. In interviews with middle class Black and White eighth graders in an integrated school (Tarver & Phinney, 1988), about a third of the subjects indicated that they were engaged in some form of exploration regarding their ethnicity. It seems likely that during early and middle adolescence, minority youth make important decisions about they ways in which they see themselves in relation to their group and to the dominant society, with clear implications for social issues such as school dropouts, gangs, and teen-age pregnancy.

A related question concerns the relationship of identity development

to self-esteem. Erikson (1968) makes clear the importance of identity achievement to healthy development. Our results (Phinney & Alipuria, 1987) showed a strong relationship between ethnic identity achievement and self-esteem in the minority subjects; those who have thought about and resolved issues regarding their ethnicity have significantly higher self-esteem than those who have not. These results are congruent with those of Parham & Helms' (1985a) study with Black college students. They suggest that "self-concept may be governed by the way the student handles the conditions of the Black experience" (p. 145).

The results of our questionnaire also give insight into ethnic identity in White subjects. Their levels of commitment were similar to those for the minorities, but their levels of search were significantly lower. This difference held when socioeconomic status and generation in the United States were controlled. Thus, the Whites subjects are more likely to be foreclosed in this area. There appears to be little reason for most White subjects to examine their own ethnicity. In fact, it is not clear what exploration in this area would consist of, as the ethnic roots of many White Americans are too distant in time to be meaningful. Furthermore, there has been virtually no research on ethnic identity development among White subjects.

As a start to understanding the importance of these issues for for White Americans not strongly associated with any ethnic group, we can again turn to Erikson (1968). He states that people have historically based their ideologies on "mutually exclusive group identities"; this tendency he calls pseudospeciation, "man's deep-seated conviction that some providence has made his tribe or race or caste, and, yes, even his

religion, 'naturally' superior to others" (1968; p. 298). This attitude, although having some positive aspects in terms of loyalty, heroism, and creativity, is also the basis of racism and other destructive forms of ethnocentrism. Erikson stresses the need to get beyond this narrow view, in order to embrace a "wider identity." However, this process is not easy. "A certain painful identity-consciousness may have to be tolerated in order to provide the conscience of man with a critique of conditions, with the insight and the conceptions necessary to heal himself of what most deeply divides and threatens him, namely,...pseudospeciation" (p. 298). We can thus conceptualize a model of ethnic identity development in which Whites proceed from a foreclosed ethnocentric position, through a moratorium involving exploration, awareness, and possibly guilt about White racism, to an achieved ethnic identity that includes acceptance of all peoples. Although many people express such views intellectually, it is not always clear that they have been achieved emotionally, through the painful process of self and group awareness. Empirical testing of this model is an important agenda for future research.

At present there are far more questions than answers in the area of ethnic identity. Research on this topic in a developmental framework is just beginning, and there are many issues which need to be addressed. A few of these are outlined below.

1. Most research on ethnic identity has been carried out by researchers studying their own group. There is a need for more studies across groups, by researchers from diverse backgrounds. In addition, most of the existing ethnic identity research is with Black subjects; there are few studies of Hispanics and Asian-Americans and virtually none with

other minority groups such as Native Americans.

2. Social class is likely to have an impact on ethnic identity formation, but most research has involved college students, i.e., middle class subjects. Given the fact that a large proportion of minority adolescents are from lower class backgrounds and relatively small numbers attend college, we need to study samples other than college students and to consider socioeconomic status as a variable.

3. With the increasing numbers of mixed marriages, there is a growing group of children of mixed background who have major identity issues to resolve in terms of who they are and what reference group they will choose (Gibbs, 1987; Hall, 1980).

4. Researchers are beginning to look at the sensitive area of the effect of skin color on life experience and self-concept, and there is evidence that lighter skinned individuals are treated differently in society, both within and across groups (Hughes & Hertel, 1988; Njeri, 1988). Identity issues are therefore likely to be different for individuals of differing color.

5. The impact of social and historical change on ethnic groups has been of interest to sociologists for some time, but has not often been included as a factor by psychologists. The historical moment will inevitably have an impact on the way individuals conceptualize identity issues; the concerns today are far different from those of the 1960s and 70s.

6. The amount of ethnic diversity varies drastically across settings, from extensive integration and intermingling to almost total segregation. The effects of these setting differences on development of

ethnic identity and attitudes are an important area for investigation.

Methodological problems make this an exceedingly difficult area of research. There are, of course, the difficulties of defining and measuring the constructs, and the same problems of format (interviews versus questionnaires) apply here as in ego identity research. The content of each stage is sensitive; it is difficult to get honest answers to questions that can be highly emotional and cause considerable discomfort. Attitudes are likely to be influenced by social desirability. It is difficult to obtain permission to work with minors and to get cooperation from minority subjects who may be suspicious of researchers' motives. Assigning subjects to ethnic groups is complicated by the lack of clear definition of groups, the diversity within groups such as "Hispanics," and the many subjects whose background is mixed.

In spite of all the attendant problems, this is a tremendously important area of research in our increasingly pluralistic society. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, minority youth (ages 15-24) comprised 24% of the population of the United States in 1980; by the mid 1990s, this figure is projected to be 31%, or close to a third of all adolescents (Wetzel, 1987). Clearly researchers cannot afford to ignore either the identity issues for this group or the impact of this diversity on the way members of the dominant culture develop their identity. The outcomes of ethnic identity development for all groups have important implications for our society in the years to come.

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